

The sudden destruction of incorrigible Sinners.

12

A
S E R M O N,

Occasioned by the miserable Death of --- LONDON,
of TUNBRIDGE; who perished in Intoxication,
in a Pond near PECKHAM in Kent, on Sabbath-
Evening, Feb. 20, 1785.

P R E A C H E D

At the Dissenting Meeting at TUNBRIDGE,
On the following Lord's Day Evening.

By the Rev. JOHN ROGERS.

- " Cut off ev'n in the blossom of his sin,
- " Unhouffell'd, unanointed, unanneal'd;
- " No reck'ning made, but sent to his account
- " With all his imperfections on his head!"

Shakespeare's Ham. Sc. III.

Printed and Sold by J. SPRANGE, *Tunbridge-Wells*; and
may be had of Mr. Stidolph, at *Tunbridge*; Mr. Cloutt,
Sevenoaks; Simmons and Kirkby, at *Canterbury* in *Kent*;
likewise of Mr. Dilly, in the *Poultry*; Mr. Buckland, in
Paternoster-row; and of Mrs. Shepherd, *Collier's-Rents*,
Southwark.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

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(11)
T O

MR. H- - - - S- - - - -,

O F

T * * * * * E,

S I R!

I KNOW not to whom I can with so much propriety (in compliance with general custom) address this Sermon, as to yourself. You were the companion in sin of the deceased, the remote occasion, and the immediate spectator, of his awful exit. The justice of your country has acquitted you from all *culpable* concern in his death. How far you stand acquitted in the eye of the Divine law *, can only be known, when your soul shall--- (I will not say, be in the same condition with his) ---make it's appearance before that God, whom it has never loved, nor remembered with devotion.

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To

* Since the finishing of this address, I have heard, that the surviving relations have asserted, that the deceased lived a very sober life, till he was seduced to drunkenness by the example of his m-f-r. It is not, indeed, to this, that the referring sentence alludes.

To *you* the Providence directs it's voice with peculiar energy ; but, as it appears, hitherto in vain. Beware, lest he take thee away with his stroke ; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee, Job, xxxvi. 18.

When y--r deceased d-m-ft-e left his usual Temple on the LORD's Day *, to obey y--r invitation, he in part anticipated the scene he should be engaged in ; but little apprehended how *fatal* the *issue* would prove to himself. And, but for the distinguishing Providence of that GOD, whose Sabbath you had been profaning, the issue had been the same to *you*. And to what should *such* an appearance of GOD in your favour, lead you ? What is the voice which such patience and forbearance direct to you ? Is it not a most solemn call to repentance and reformation, and *breaking off your sins by righteousness* ? If it be disregarded---if the same impiety and irreligion, the same *practical atheism* distinguish your future life, as have marked the preceding stages, tremble, lest that GOD whose SPIRIT shall not always strive with man, and whose patience will not always bear with rebellious sinners, hold up *you* also, as another monument of his vengeance.

Had

* "-----EGENO's Temple was the Alehouse, and his Devotion
"---oaths and impiety." Dodd's Reflect. on Death, chap. xvi.

Had that fatal night numbered *you* with the dead, which, not your own caution, but a superior, tho' unacknowledged, hand prevented, how awful an appearance would your soul have made before it's final Judge! And to which of the two states allotted for impious finners, and pious souls, in the judgment of your own conscience would his award for ever have consigned you? You need not be told, that *HIS judgment is according to truth*; and, that whatever be his *apparent* procedure in *this* world, he will in the world *to come* for ever discriminate *between him that sweareth, and him that feareth, an oath*. The *measure* of your companion's *iniquities was filled up*. The patience of GOD had borne very long with him in vain. At length, that GOD, who *will not be mocked*, interposed to vindicate his own holiness, and to shew his zeal for the purity of his own Sabbath. You, like him, are making speedy progress to *fill up the measure* of your own sins. Disregardful of the GOD that made you; inattentive to the call of his word, the alarms of his Providence, and the admonitions of your own conscience; thoughtless of the infinite worth of your own soul; unmindful of the tremendous issue of a life of sin, and of the fearful estate of Christless finners at the bar of GOD; unawed by the terrors
of

of Hell on the one hand, and uninfluenced by the hopes of Heaven on the other, you are hastening on to eternity, as fast as the pinions of time can carry you. You are singing a requiem to your soul, while sailing down the smooth current of impiety and pleasure. On your immortal soul I charge you, stop---and seriously weigh, whither it will conduct you. Know, the smooth current of impiety disembogues itself into the tremendous ocean of Divine wrath. Into this, without a saving change, must your immortal spirit be for ever plunged. Remember, you are a creature of the dust, and a child of eternity; every moment a borderer on two worlds, yet uncertain, in which the next moment may unalterably fix your state. And does *thoughtlessness* become such an one? Is it not the greatest folly a rational being can be guilty of, to be inattentive to such solemn realities? Once more has the Providence of God most seriously addressed you. Once more has it's warning voice called upon you to speedy repentance, and contrition for sin. If it be disregarded, if repentance and amendment be not it's happy effect upon you; what awful reason to fear, that an injured, and long-affronted God has given you up to judicial induration; and that *the God of this world has effectually blinded the eyes of your mind*, among the
other

other children of unpersecutableness (Eph. ii. 2. in the Orig.) lest the knowledge of God should shine in to you. They are solemn words of the wisdom of God, directed to incorrigible sinners, *Because I have called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded:---I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.---Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me,* Prov. i. 24, et seq.

Yet I would persuade myself of better things concerning you. If, through the blessing of God, the death of your companion should prove the means of spiritual life to you; if his awful end should rouse you to reflection on your own wicked life, and lead you to seek to God for his Grace to recover you out of the snare of the Devil; if it should impress on you a concern for your better and immortal part, and lead you, by faith and repentance, to the Blood of CHRIST; if it should make you more attentive to public Worship, and render you more amiable and tender in your domestic character and relation, than hitherto; you will have reason to be thankful to God for the Providence; and I shall be happy in reflecting, that the publication of this Sermon was a means of helping forward so desirable and necessary a work!

Through

Through your hands, I inform all my Readers, that vanity, or a desire of appearing in public, was not the most remote occasion of the publication of this Discourse. I am sensible, it will do me little honour as a Preacher or a Writer. A concern to be faithful to the souls of my Hearers, and to *make full proof of my Ministry*, led me to improve the solemn Providence in preaching; and a desire to be more extensively useful, suggested it's publication. Should it be instrumental, in the hands of the Blessed SPIRIT, to awaken one soul to thoughtfulness on eternal things, reform one vicious character, or emulate my Reverend Brethren of whatever Communion, to an happier improvement of such and similar Providences, I shall rejoice, and willingly forego literary reputation.

I am,

Your well-wisher for both worlds,



J. ROGERS.

Speldhurst, near
Tunbridge-Wells,
Mar. 14, 1785.

PROV.

PROV. XXIX. 1.

He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his Neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without Remedy.

A WATCHFUL observance of the Providences of God, as they interest ourselves, or others around us, is a point of spiritual wisdom. The end of God in all his dispensations with the moral world, is the instruction and happiness of his creatures. Our duty is to improve that end, by acknowledging the wisdom and rectitude of our Maker, and by aiming to extract spiritual profit from his dispensations. The death of good men, and the death of wicked men, called home in the midst of their usefulness, or cut down in the midst of their sins, are universally acknowledged to be *especially teaching* Providences. If our *visual* organs were formed by our Maker for the contemplation of his glory in the visible
B heavens*,

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heavens*, how nobly employed are our *men'al* powers, when deriving lessons of spiritual wisdom from his Providential dispensations ! A spiritual mind is never at a loss for objects of contemplation. It can deduce intellectual improvement from the most common scenes in life, and find a source of sacred knowledge in the most trifling occurrences. The death of a *good* man is calculated to inspire us with diligence in *making sure our own calling and election* : the death of a *wicked* man is designed to warn us, *that we fall not after the same example of unbelief*. These two events are very common in the present state of the visible church, where the *Tares* and the *Wheat* grow promiscuously together. But it is sometimes the pleasure of GOD, in the course of Providence so to dispose of the circumstances that attend them, as to make a very striking appeal to our souls. The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth; Ps. ix. 16. Such Providences demand especial attention.

Many of you, I presume, from these observations, already perceive, that I have an immediate reference to that very awful occurrence on this day se'nnight, the sudden removal of a
: wicked

* " Os homini sublime dedit, Cœlumque tueri

" Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus."

wicked man in the midst of his sins, out of time into eternity*. The relation of it made a very deep impression on my own mind. It is the peculiar

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* Should any of my Readers, through an excess of modern charity, which, in a far different sense from the Apostle's, "hopeth all things," apprehend this, and similar expressions, too harsh, as being definitive of his state in the invisible world, I would ask them, Do the sacred Oracles afford any Criteria, by which we may pass a judgment on men's characters through life, and consequently, of their state after-death, or do they not? Does a life of impiety unrepented of, certainly lead on to eternal damnation; or, Do virtue and vice change hands in the world of spirits? Can any soul see the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate? (John iii. 3.) Are the threatenings of God, that the wicked, and those who forget him, shall be turned into Hell; "that swearers and drunkards shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," mere illusions; or, are they serious denunciations of divine wrath? Have we any reason, either from the Word, or our own ideas of the Holiness and unspotted Purity of the Divine Nature, to believe, that the Blessed God ever suffered a man to spend his whole life in this world in habitual profaneness, that he took him away in the very act of sin, without the least space for, or sign of repentance, and yet introduced him into those mansions of Glory, from which he has excluded every sinner? If the Word do afford us this reason, then wicked men may abuse the Grace of God, and set at nought all his solemn warnings; and comfort themselves with the hope, that all shall be well at last. Concerning Judas, dying in the very act of sin, it is expressly said, he went to his own place. The instance of the thief on the cross, is not at all to the point. There was time for repentance, and there were the signs of it. But respecting this deceased sinner, there were neither. His sinful companions in the Town, have, in my hearing, lamented his awful exit, "as not affording him time to make his peace with God." How they who yet live in sin, unawakened, as it appears, by the solemn Providence, mean "to make their own peace with God," should such a sudden death be their's, is not my business to determine.

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culiar business of a faithful Minister to improve such solemn occasions for the good of his hearers. I am happy that God has put the opportunity into my hand, wherein his *Providence* and his *Word* conspire together, to teach us a very important lesson. O that the influences of the Divine SPIRIT may not be wanting, and then the Providence will not speak in vain! It is with a design to improve the awful exit of that unhappy man, that I have chosen the words of the text. Let me hope for peculiarly serious attention from you.

The chapter, at the head of which stands our text, is the closing part of an appendix to the book of Proverbs, for which we are indebted, under God, to the piety and diligence of some of good king Hezekiah's Scribes, Ch. xxv. 1. The book claims for it's author, Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel. It consists of short, sententious directions and observations on the most important occurrences in civil, relative, and religious life; but not in any regular series, except in the first part. This mode of instruction has the sanction of antiquity, as well as it's intrinsic aptitude to answer the end designed, to recommend it. The seven wise men of Greece
are

are immortalized for the *excellence* and *brevity* of their maxims, the longest of which in the Greek is only four words. One of their sayings, "know thyself," was esteemed so valuable, that the Poets feigned it to have come down from Heaven. Solomon, the inspired author of this book, was well qualified for the work. He was the wisest of all men. He had a large acquaintance with men and manners, a deep experience of the vanity of the world, and had searched the creatures through for happiness. It is a beautiful thought of Bishop HOPKINS on this book, "We are not generally to expect any connexion, either of sense or sentences, in this book of Proverbs. Other parts of scripture are like a rich mine, where the precious ore runs along in one continued vein; but this is like an heap of pearls, which are not the less valuable for being unstrung." On Prov. xiv. 9. Serm. I. Works, fol. p. 371. You will not, therefore, expect me to give you any analysis of the surrounding context.

I shall not, on this occasion, arrange the several parts of the text under their distinct heads, but rather deduce a few observations from the ideas expressed or implied in them. "He that
"being

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"being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."
Wherein observe,

1. The depraved nature of men. They need *reproof*. This is implied. The description which the word of God gives of men by nature, is a very humiliating one; *Man is born like a wild ass's colt*, Job xi. 12. We come into the world ignorant, and need instruction; and our natures soon manifest a propension to sin, and need correction. As men advance in life, their nature does not lose this propensity. On the contrary, it keeps equal progress with the growth of the body, and the expansion of the faculties of the mind. The motives to vice strengthen with the habit, and encrease the propension. Hence we discern, that men in general forget God, disobey his laws, and live *atheists in the world*, as the Apostle emphatically words it, Ephes. ii. 12. (in the Orig.) *They profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, and to every good work reprobate. Their transgressions say--- There is no fear of God before their eyes. They live and act, as if there was no being who kept a watchful eye over their conduct, or would one day call them to account. Some blaspheme their Maker, others trample on his acknowledged*

ledged laws; some break his Sabbaths, others injure their own constitutions, or their neighbour's property; and all men, till Divine Grace makes a change, live unmindful of him. How few can say with David, *I set the LORD always before me!* How few make Hagar's pious sentiment, the rule of their conduct, *Thou, GOD, see'st me!* This, my Brethren, is the *depravity* of our natures. It was not in our *original* constitution. Man was an holy being, averse to sin, and mindful of his Maker; but he is now become a depraved creature, enclined to sin, and unmindful of GOD; nor can aught but Almighty Grace restore him. *The carnal mind is enmity against GOD.* It is the *law of the SPIRIT of life in CHRIST JESUS*, that alone can make a soul free from the law of sin.

2. The kind dealings of GOD with sinners. He *often reproveth* them. Perhaps the inspired author chiefly intends the reproofs which sinners receive from their fellow men, as Parents, Ministers, or Magistrates. But as all these derive their authority from GOD, it may with propriety be immediately referred to him. How great his condescension, how amazing his patience toward a world of guilty beings! How righteously might he act toward us, as men use to do
with

with a nest of vipers---crush them in the egg, e'er they become capable of doing mischief. He might justly cut a man off in the first commission of actual sin. But he spares in order that he may reprove; he reproveth, to bring sinners to repentance and pardon. *It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin,* Jer. xxxvi. 3. Various are the ways in which God reproveth sinners.

1) In his word. This is the royal law of Heaven, the rule for our obedience, the trial of our integrity, and the balance in which we must all be weighed another day. How plain and direct are its precepts to holiness, and its dehortations against sin! How dreadful are its threatnings against vice, and how pungent its motives to piety! How clearly does it point out the different issues of a life of sin, and a life of holiness; assuring men on the word of HIM *that cannot lie, that they shall eat of the fruit of their own doings. That he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting,* Gal. vi. 8. It contains every thing that can alarm

larm our fears, and inspire our hopes. Must not a sinner's conscience fly in his face, when he reads his great Creator's law against sin? Must he not, at times, anticipate the vengeance due to his follies? This word of God is a perpetual reproof. For it is in men's hands, and they ought to *meditate therein day and night*. Justly then, may God be said, *often to reprove sinners*, when his Word is in their hands.

2) In the faithful preaching of the Gospel. This is the Word of God expounded, and enforced on the conscience. It is not a *jejune* harrangue on the excellency of moral virtue, or a flattering picture of the moral rectitude of human nature, as "the Parasites of mankind" draw to please deluded hearers. Such unfaithful dealing with immortal souls, belongs to those *depths of Satan*, in which multitudes *are drowned in destruction and perdition*. On the contrary, it seriously apprizes men of those much-forgotten truths, that they are in a state of awful distance from their great Creator, and incapable by any exertions of their own to compass his favour. That their natures are so depraved by sin, as to render them everlastingly unfit for Heaven, except that change, called by the lip of truth,

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Regeneration,

Regeneration, take place upon them. The *ignorance* of some men, and the *impudence* of others in *denying* these solemn, heaven-asserted truths, conspire to render their frequent inculcation the necessary business of that Minister, who would not be *guilty of the blood of the souls* committed to his charge. This unhappy man, whose awful end has led me to this subject, not unfrequently attended in this place. He heard, as you have repeatedly, the misery of a state of sin represented, as it respects the soul in this life, and as it finally separates from God and happiness in the next. He was warned of the danger, he was apprized of the consequence, and directed to the remedy revealed in the Gospel, the all-atoning blood of the SAVIOUR. God often spoke to him, and often *reproved* him in a preached Gospel: but in vain. At length Justice cut him down in his sins.

3) By their own consciences. Conscience is the transcript of the written law in the hearts of men. It supplied the place of revelation to the Heathen, and taught them more of God, and of his worship, than they were enclined to know; *therefore*, says the Apostle, *they are without excuse*. In conjunction with the word of God, and the influence

influence of his SPIRIT, it is our best direction to duty, and our surest preservative against sin. It's approbation is next to the eulogy of God, it's condemnation is Hell begun below. The worst of men cannot always escape it's reproofs. They may as soon fly from themselves, as from their consciences. Though they attempt to drown it's voice, and their own senses, in liquor, it will sometimes be heard. But if men turn a deaf ear to it's friendly whispers here, it will speak in a voice of ten thousand thunders in the world to come. If it's gentle motions be unattended to now, it will hereafter prove the *worm that never dies*. Though the life of this poor wretch was an almost uniform scene of blasphemy and drunkenness, there is no question but conscience sometimes spoke. And what was every voice of conscience, but the voice of God in reproof? Yet it was totally disregarded, *untill the wrath came upon him to the uttermost.*

4) In the death of their fellow-sinners. This is one of the most solemn appeals of God to our senses. When men see their fellow-sinners in a moment cut down in their sins, without the least space for repentance, it is natural to enquire, On what scene do their disembodied spirits enter?

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The justice of God, and the solemn declarations of his Word, forbid us to draw the false conclusion, that they enter on an eternity of happiness. What is the alternative? They enter on a scene of eternal misery, banished from God the fountain of happiness, and *tormented in the presence of the holy Angels, and in the presence of the LAMB for ever.* The wicked, says the final Judge of quick and dead, whose award shall one day consign the whole world to their unchangeable abodes, *shall go into everlasting punishment.* If aught external could awaken secure sinners to seriousness, we might imagine such an event would. But a *messenger from the dead* would be lost upon those, who, with the bible in their hand, go on in sin, *Luke 16. ult.* This hardened transgressor had many warnings, even in this Town, of men dying in their sins, and closing a life of habitual intoxication without repentance. But was he alarmed, or reformed by such solemn events? No; he set them all at defiance, and went on in sin, till God held him up to us as a monument of vengeance. In him was literally verified the description which holy Job gives of the end of wicked men; *Terrors take hold on him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The East-wind carrieth him away*

away, and he departeth; and as a storm hurleth him out of his place, Ch. xxvii. 20, 21. He wandered out of the way of understanding, and now remaineth in the congregation of the dead; for ever silent in darkness, Prov. xxi. 16.---1 Sam. ii. 9. But observe farther,

3. The dreadful nature of sin. Men *harden their necks*, notwithstanding these many *reproofs* of the blessed God. It is the nature of sin to *deceive* and *harden*. It *deceives* men into a false opinion of the safety of their state. Though they hear the awful threatnings of God's law denounced against sin and sinners, yet they do not feel them on their own persons, nor see them fulfilled *often* on their fellow-sinners. This leads them into carnal security, and prompts them to imagine, that God is *not serious* in his threatnings. All things appear to go on well with them, and their deceitful hearts persuade them, that all things shall be eventually well. And as sin deceives, so it *hardens*. Repeated sins blunt the edge of conscience, and render it's reproofs less forcible. Add to which, the Example of their fellow-sinners serves to strengthen them in their rebellion. They see each other engaged in the same vile employment of sacrificing their immortal

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mortal interests to guilty pleasure, yet thoughtless and unconcerned; therefore they are led to believe, *no evil shall happen to us.* Though the Ministers of CHRIST aim to rouse them from this soul-ruining delusion, by setting before their eyes the inevitable damnation annexed by God himself to the commission of sin, it is all in vain. Example and inclination plead more powerfully. *Defendit numerus, junctæque umbone Phalanges,* JUV. Thus sinners mutually harden themselves to their own destruction! So Moses represents a man *hearing the words of the curse, yet blessing himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace,* Deut. xxix. 19. And Solomon, *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil,* Eccl. viii. 11. Hence wicked men are called sons of Belial, without yoke, lawless ones; and are said to *hate instruction, and despise reproof, and make a mock of sin,* 1 Sam. ii. 12. Prov. v. 12. and xiv. 9. How often was this deceased sinner *reproved?* How often in this place did he hear of the dreadful demerit of sin, the sad condition of Christless sinners, the importance of faith in CHRIST, the necessity of Regeneration, and the value of the soul! but all in vain; *he hardened his neck.* The very last time he was in this House of God, he
heard

heard of the necessity of union to CHRIST by faith, and the awful event which a day of judgment would prove to sinners*. He heard the Preacher represent a faithful Minister as appearing before the Divine Tribunal, *a swift witness* against impenitent sinners, whom he had warned and cautioned during life. But *he hardened his neck, and God suddenly destroyed him, and that without remedy.* Which leads me to observe,

4. The fearful end of incorrigible sinners, *They shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* Though the patience of God long bear with impious men, his justice requires, that he at length fulfill his threatnings. His moral character, as Governor of the world, demands, that he punish the abuses offered to his long-suffering, and make some men examples of his vengeance *in this life.* But though such examples do not very often occur, we are assured from his Word, that no sinner can escape his damnation in the world to come. Let not sinners, then, be bold in their impiety, because instances of his anger are not *frequently* held up to their view. They have

* Subject, Col. i. 28. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in CHRIST JESUS." Closing Sermon.

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have to do with an omnipotent avenger, whose Justice and Holiness, the guardians of his law, are engaged to punish the violators of it. If they will not be reformed, they shall be ruined. If they abuse the preventing remedy, they put themselves beyond the reach of the recovering remedy. *How oft, asks holy Job, is the candle of the wicked put out? how oft cometh their destruction upon them?* Ch. xvi. 17. They are *suddenly destroyed* in the midst of their security. While they are saying to their souls, *I shall have peace; Take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry:* GOD says, *Thou fool! this night THEY SHALL REQUIRE thy soul,* Luk. xii. 20. (in the Orig.) Who shall require it? Death, as the executioner of GOD's threatening in this world; the Devils as the executioners of it in the next. Agreeable to which is the Psalmist's representation of the secure state of wicked men; *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction,* Ps. lxxiii. 18. He conveys to us the idea of a man walking on the edge of a precipice; in a moment the ground proves unfaithful to his step, and he is dashed down into destruction. A fall the more dreadful, because unexpected! Thus it is oftentimes with sinners. Secure in a state of sin, unheedful of the many warnings

warnings and cautions of GOD, they go on in the way of their own heart ; till death breaks the silver cord of life, and plunges them into remediless destruction. Such is the solemn instance we have before our eyes. A solemn instance of the truth of holy writ. An awful proof, that GOD *will not be mocked*, though his patience long bear with the provocations of sinners. This departed sinner was *often reprov'd* ; but his life was not changed. He had warning upon warning, but *he hardened his neck*. And how fearful was his end ! Having lived a life of blasphemy, drunkenness and sabbath-breaking, he was suddenly cut down in the very midst of his years, and of his sins.---In the very act of sabbath-breaking, and drunkenness.---Without the least time for repentance.---Nay, as I have been informed, his *very last words* were *blasphemy* ! Oh what a dreadful end is this ! Thus to be sent to a man's final account, with all his sins on his head ! There is nothing in nature more awful than such a transition into the world of spirits. And where has his sinful, unrenewed soul taken up it's everlasting abode ? Not with CHRIST *. The Blessed GOD has not " in great mercy taken " his soul to himself." He was taken away in
D *wrath.*

* See the marginal Note, at page 11.

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wrath. There is not the least reason in the world, from his past life, even to *hope* it. That Minister must have neither grace nor conscience, that dares to assert it *. The consideration is enough

* Should the officiating Minister chance to cast his eye on this sentence, and think the Preacher too harsh and uncharitable; apprehending himself "bound by subscription (to adopt the words of one of his Brethren) "to the unvaried use of his Prayer Book," the Preacher, by way of rejoinder, would beg leave to ask him these two questions:

1. Can it be reasonably supposed, Sir, that any of your "acknowledged superiors in the church," when apprized of the circumstances; would in the least have censured your conduct in the omission of those strong expressions relative to his eternal happiness? Rather would they not have commended your integrity and faithfulness as a Minister, in refusing to prostitute your sacred character, by uttering, in the presence of GOD, what you had every reason to believe was not a truth?

2. As it is not reasonable to suppose that you were unacquainted with the manner of his life, and the circumstances of his death; did not zeal for GOD, piety, conscience, faithfulness to immortal souls; and every consideration that can influence a Minister, who, as "steward of the mysteries of GOD," must render up his account to his great Master, demand a distinction on this occasion? To express before a numerous auditory, on so solemn an occasion, when men's minds, if at any time, may be supposed to be seriously impressed, your "hope of the everlasting happiness" of such a character; and to pray, that your, and the people's souls may rest with his-----what is it but declaring to immortal souls, that there is really no difference between virtue and vice, piety and profaneness, in the world to come, though for other ends, and on other occasions, you may seem to hint that there is. Is not this the ready way to banish the little remains of the fear of a judgment to come, entirely from the minds of men? Is it any wonder, that your, and your Brethren's sermons have no happier effect to promote even Morality, than we see they have? Rather, need we

wonder,

enough to freeze our souls with horror. But---
his state is fixed for a never-ending eternity, by
that Judge who will do right, and whose decisive

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sentence

wonder, that men live practical atheists in the world, and yet console themselves with the hope, that all shall be well at last, when their leaders in religion act in masquerade, and make no scruple to inspire the delusive hope? With what propriety, or consistency with yourself, can you upon any future occasion, declare,-----and if a faithful Minister of CHRIST, the declaration, like a golden thread, must interweave itself with every sermon,-----that without repentance and regeneration, and holiness of life as evidential thereof, no soul "can see the kingdom of GOD?" How can you ever caution careless hearers, that no external devotion, no regular attendance on divine worship, can atone for the want of faith in CHRIST, and of interest in his Righteousness; on which the word suspends the eternal state of every one? It is a dreadful thing for a Minister so to act towards his hearers, as that "the blood of souls be required at his hand" another day. To us, as engaged by profession, in the same great work, our respective hearers look up for an example, as well as instruction, in holy things. If we neglect "to declare all the counsel of GOD," fail to distinguish the precious from the vile, or so perform our Ministry as directly to encourage delusive hopes of salvation without the possession of the qualifications required; we sin against CHRIST, we ruin immortal souls, and must expect the severest vengeance from his affronted Godhead. That is an awful word addressed to time-serving priests in the Jewish Church. "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.--Therefore," says GOD, "have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people," Ezek. xxii. 26. with Mal. ii. 9. If you think this long note needs an apology, mine is in the words of Moses, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Lev. xix. 17. with 1 Tim. v. 20.

sentence none of his creatures shall be able to tax with injustice. There is a passage in the book of Job, so apposite to his case, that I will close this part of the discourse with the recital of it. *The light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine.—The steps of his strength shall be straitned, and his own counsel shall cast him down. For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare.—The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.—His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.—His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street.—He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world.—He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings.—They that come after him shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted, Job xviii. 5. et seq.*

IMPROVEMENT.

And what, my Brethren, is the use, which we who survive, should make of the awful Providence? When the great God deigns to address his creatures, he demands reverential attention. How forcibly does he address us all on this very interesting occasion! How solemn is the Providence! How pregnant with Divine instruction!

tion! Let me join issue with it, in the selection of a few important lessons.

INSTRUCTION.

1. How offensive is sin to an holy God! Sin is the rational creature's transgression of the Divine law, or his want of conformity in spirit and obedience to it's requisitions. Sin is the worst of evils in the whole creation of God; it is the parent and source, whence every other evil owes it's origin. This hurled the rebel-angels from their thrones, and overwhelmed them in eternal ruin. By this, mankind have lost their Maker's favour, are exposed to every misery in this world, and to his wrath in the world to come. It is against this, that all the thunders of his law are directed. Pure and holy himself, and at an infinite remove from every thing unholy, sin is *the abhorrence of his righteous soul. The foolish shall not stand in his sight: he hateth all the workers of iniquity.* He shewed his infinite hatred against sin, by cursing the ground for man's transgression, by drowning an ungodly world with water, and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes. His word is full of the denunciations of his vengeance against sinners.

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ners. His wrath is revealed against all unrighteousness. He will punish sinners *with everlasting destruction from his presence*. View the infinite hatred of God against sin, in that infernal pit, where devils and damned spirits shall lie "swelling in unquenchable flames for ever*." View the hatred of God against sin, in the sufferings of the blessed JESUS. Though the eternal Son of his love, yet, when *his soul was to be made an expiatory offering for sin*, it PLEASED the LORD to bruise him. Let our souls for ever adore him, that through this expiatory offering, he can pardon this infinite evil of sin, and by the grace of his Holy SPIRIT eradicate this bitter root from our natures. But though these be the declarations of that God *that cannot lie*, yet he sometimes condescends to convince his creatures of the truth of them, by his Providential dispensations. We have an instance, in the case before us, of the infinite hatred of God against sin, in the sudden excision of an impious Blasphemer, whom *vengeance suffered not to live*. Let each soul take warning, and seek to God
for

"-----ESTUANTEM in flammis, per æterna sæcula."
BURNET, (Dr. THO.) de Stat Mort. & Resurg. HAUD ITA
AUCTORI, REM SE HABERE, CONCEBITUR. Vid. Swinden
on Hell, Append.

for the recovering influences of Divine Grace, lest iniquity be his own eventual ruin. Learn,

2. The necessity of Divine Grace to change our natures. These are so depraved by sin, that nothing but a Divine Power can effect an alteration. Sin so deceives and hardens men in impiety, that they can unmoved, hear of the tremendous ruin that shall one day burst like a storm on the heads of a guilty world, and feel no disposition to aim after a prevention. They are so in love with sin, that they willingly risque God's everlasting damnation; and in the height of their madness, defy an omnipotent avenger to do his worst. They freely resign up their immortal interests, and part with CHRIST and Heaven, and every thing that souls should hold dear, rather than part with their sins. Nor can aught external, but as accompanied with a divine power, arouse them to reflection. No power of moral suasion can do it, no threatenings of the law, nor examples of Divine vengeance. Not even punishment itself can change a sinful nature;-----then the devils, and lost spirits of darkness would be holy beings. Only a principle of Divine Grace infused by the Holy SPIRIT, can renew our sinful natures, or render

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as acceptable to GOD. Hence a soul's conversion to GOD, is called *a new creation*. Could this departed soul on a sudden start up in the midst of a company of impious men, met to consume the LORD's day-evening in swearing and drunkenness.---Could he bring Hell-fire in his countenance, breathe brimstone with his words, and shew in his breast * the gnawings of *the worm that never dies* ; and warn them with all the emotion of a soul lost to GOD, and to all happiness, that they come not, with him, into *that place of torment* ;---The arrival of *such a being* from the nether world would alarm, and terrify them; it might, perhaps, introduce temporary reformation: Yet there is no question, such is the hardening nature of sin, but they would *return, like the dog to his vomit*. The rich man, in the parable, urged such a favour with great importunity, as being a probable means to effect reformation. But Abraham, to whom the suit was

* If the PROPRIETY of these allusive expressions be questioned, the Preacher's best apology is the example of his Divine Master, who, on a similar occasion has used them in the same sense. " In Hell he (to wit, a departed soul) lift up his EYES, " and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his BOSOM.--- " He prayed, Father Abraham---send Lazarus, (another departed spirit) " that he may dip the TIP of his FINGER in water, " and cool my TONGUE." Luk. xvi. 23, 24.

was preferred, answers, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*, Luk. xvi. ult. Teaching us, that the most awful appeals of God to our senses, even the appearance of a damned soul to convince men of an eternal hell, would be lost on those, whom the denunciations of Divine wrath in the word, fail to reform. Who could have imagined that Nebuchadnezzar would have returned to idolatry, after so signal an appearance of God in the protection of his own worshippers? *Dan. iii. 28.* None but that power that at first created us, can new create us. What effect has the present Providence had to reform men in this Town? Has the swearer forsook his oaths, or the drunkard his cups? Has the Sabbath-breaker more duly attended on public worship, and commenced a new man? Nay, is that unhappy character, to whom the Providence addresses itself with such solemn energy, at all reformed by it? Has he begun a new life, resolutely determined, by the Grace of God, to abandon those courses, which, in the issue, brought irremediable destruction on his companion's head? So true is the word, *Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard his spots?*

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then

then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil, Jer. xiii. 23.

C O M M I N A T I O N.

3. Let sinners of every description be warned by this tragical scene. Warned of the dreadful issue of a life of impiety---of the inexorable justice, and zeal against sin, of their great Creator. Warned of the necessity of repentance, and of faith in the blood of JESUS to expiate their guilt. O that I could proclaim as with STENTOR'S voice, or with the voice of ten thousand thunders, in the ears of unthinking sinners, "Ye must be born again!" Except the Grace of CHRIST change your natures, the influences of the Holy SPIRIT excite Gospel repentance, and an interest in the Righteousness of the SAVIOUR be graciously afforded, you are lost, lost for ever, lost beyond redemption! Be warned, ye swearers, drunkards, and Sabbath-breakers, if such vicious characters be in this assembly, be warned by this sad catastrophe. How soon may God hold *you* up as a warning to others! This deceased sinner little apprehended on the past Lord's day, that it would be the *last* that should shine on him, the *last* Sabbath that

that should be in his power to violate---He little thought that the last intoxication would prove the *last* indeed to him---that the *last* oath would usher his guilty soul into the presence of a sin-hating God. And would not you, like him, *lie down in eternal sorrow*? Repent of your sins. Break off your iniquities by repentance and godly sorrow. Bend the stubborn knee of your souls to the God that made you, and who can curse you to Hell in a moment. Approach by faith to that injured SAVIOUR, whose invitations you have scorned, whose blood you have trampled on, whose SPIRIT you have resisted, and to whose overtures of life and salvation in the Gospel, you have turned a deaf ear. Persist not in your sins, lest in the despairing words of wicked Balaam, *I shall see him, but not now, I shall behold him, but not nigh*, you anticipate that dreadful day, when *every eye shall indeed see him*, and finally impenitent sinners *wail for ever because of him*.

EXHORTATION.

4. Improve the present season of Grace and Hope. *Behold now is the accepted time, now is*

*the day of salvation. Now the great God condescends to exhort, warn, and instruct you. How soon may these golden opportunities end! How soon the treaty of peace between your souls and Heaven be consummated, and God forbear to call! His SPIRIT shall not always strive with man; how soon may that SPIRIT cease to strive with you! Improve the consideration of the infinite value of your souls, and of the necessity of Regeneration, and of Faith in CHRIST, to stimulate you to seek for the aids of Divine Grace, to effect so important a work. It is the declaration of CHRIST himself, *If ye believe not---ye shall die in your sins, and where I am, thither ye cannot come.* Beware how you trifle with the patience of God. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; that which a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Consider, (and may God impress the thought with all it's pungency upon your minds) what if this Sabbath should prove the last to any of you;---this the last Sermon---the last call to repentance,---How awful the transition from a life of impiety into the world of spirits! Once more has God condescended to make a most solemn appeal to your souls. Take heed, *lest you fall after the same example of unbelief.* Such*

Providences,

Providences, if they fail to *soften*, generally *harden*.

5. Consider, what ample encouragement the Gospel of CHRIST affords to penitent sinners. It stretches out it's friendly arms to receive every returning Prodigal. It answers every objection, and allays every fear of a kind reception from an offended God, which an impressive sense of sin might excite. Our LORD JESUS, as if he would preclude every surmise arising from the greatness of past sins, commanded, that the first overture of Pardon should be made to them, *who with wicked hands crucified and slew him*, Luk. xxiv. 47. Delineated by him, we behold the Blessed God in the character of a tender father, commiserating a rebellious child, and anticipating with parental kindness his humble submission, Luk. xv. 20, 22. The truly penitent sinner has every thing to encourage his hopes, that he shall not seek forgiveness in vain. God is in CHRIST reconciling the world to himself. *In him the promises are all Yea and Amen.* There is infinite dignity in his attonement, infinite merit in his righteousness, to pardon the greatest transgressors. *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that CHRIST JESUS came into the*
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the world to save sinners. The blood of CHRIST cleanseth from all sin. Through his incarnation and obedience GOD can be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in JESUS. The many instances recorded in the word of pardon vouchsafed to the greatest sinners on their repentance, are encouragements to the humble penitent, that his suit shall be accepted. It is as true of our Mediator enthroned in Glory, as when sustaining the form of a servant, that he made intercession for the transgressors, Isa. liii. ult.

Let motives weighty and important as these, sink down into your hearts. May they lead you to know in this your day, the things which belong to your everlasting peace, e'er they are hid from your eyes! Your life, on which all your preparation for eternity depends, is precarious. You may be counting on long years of security to come, and expecting as many seasons of Grace as are past; but suddenly your feet may stumble on the dark mountains. So the antediluvian world, as our LORD represents, were eating and drinking, and planting, and building, till, in an unexpected moment, the flood came, and swept them into destruction. Remember, sudden death to a good man, is sudden glory: to the wicked, it is sudden damnation.

damnation. But I hope to present you with a striking contrast to the present occasion, on the next Lord's day evening *. My earnest Prayers follow my Sermon, O that the Providence may not speak in vain !

May Almighty God grant his Blessing to the hints at this time suggested, and to him shall be the Glory, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

* Referring to a Funeral Sermon for my much honoured Tutor, the late Reverend Dr. GIBBONS, preached in the same place on the succeeding Lord's Day Evening, MARCH 6. Text, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13.

ERRATUM.

Page 10. line 16. read, Course of his.

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CHRIST.



* Referring to a former sermon for my much honored Tutor,
the late Reverend Mr. [illegible] preached in the same place
on the Sabbath Day of the Evening, March 6. 1721.
I think we are bound to do in the Lord's Service.

ERRATUM.
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